

MY MEMORIES OF PETER TAYLOR

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I first met Peter Taylor when I was at Oxford University, reading Botany and attending lectures on plant systematics given by E.F. (Heff) Warburg, one of the leading authorities on the British flora. I had been selected for a University expedition to East Africa, to the Mahali Mountains, by Lake Tanganyika. Tropical East African Botany was at that time the principal flora project at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which was why I arrived there in 1959, as a young student still wet behind the ears, to be given a crash course in collecting plants in East Africa. One of the most memorable activities was a long session going through a newly arrived collection of dried specimens and sorting them into the correct families and providing provisional determinations, where possible. These occasions, known as “family sorts”, were popular events and involved most of the botanists in the Kew Herbarium who studied tropical African flora. It was on one of these occasions that I first met Peter. I was meeting a lot of new people at Kew, and so my memories are somewhat unclear at this juncture, but I remember him as being very approachable, extremely helpful with good advice and a good sense of humour. It was later, on my return from the expedition to Africa that I got to know him better, when I was studying some of the plants we had collected, and was occasionally invited on local field trips to the English countryside with members of Kew staff. Peter was originally much interested in ferns and gave me good advice on recognizing hybrid horsetails (*Equisetum*) in the field.

It was some years later, after a period as lecturer at Bristol University, that I applied and gained a post at RBG Kew, enabling me to study the flora of Brazil. At this time, Peter was much involved in the study of *Utricularia*, and encouraged me to make detailed collections, including material in spirit to include the traps, which were taxonomically important. In 1971, I joined a group from the New York Botanical Garden, led by Dr. Howard Irwin, and spent several months in Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Bahia States, collecting a fascinating range of flora, both the Lamiaceae, which was my own particular interest, but also a whole range of species of *Utricularia*. It was the first time that some of these had been collected with traps, as most collections are made only of the aerial parts. When subsequently I organized a series of expeditions to Bahia, to study its rich flora, I made sure to continue my *Utricularia* activities. Peter was always pleased to see this material, and occasionally jokingly said that he was going to name a species after me. At this time, he had a rather beautiful young lady assistant, originally from Sweden, and he enjoyed teasing me about what he thought was my obvious interest in her. Among the plants I had collected in Bahia was a small terrestrial species with small white or palest lilac flowers, growing in the Chapada Diamantina. One day, to my surprise, he said “Oh, by the way, I have named that species after you”. I looked it up, but it had a name that meant nothing to me! When I asked him what *Utricularia parthenopipes* referred to, he said, with a wicked smile, it was from the Greek, meaning “ogling young virgins”. I have dined out on that story quite a bit!

Apart from his botanical activities, Peter was also a brilliant cabinet maker in his spare time, selecting and maturing the timber that he used. He made a whole range of beautiful objects, including a harpsichord and, for me, rebuilding in oak the body of an antique grandfather clock.

The last project, that we worked on together, was after his retirement, when I was studying a new genus of Scrophulariaceae, which we had recently collected in Bahia. It was a strange little plant growing in an area resembling an inland dune, with the tiny peltate leaves sitting on the surface of the sand. The petioles and stems were all buried below the surface and there was a lilac haze

of many inflorescences of small flowers, covering a large area. At the time, we thought it might be Lentibulariaceae. While I was engaged in preparing text for a paper in which this plant would be described as a new genus of Scrophulariaceae, Peter came into my room, saying that he had been clearing out his desk, and handed me a folder. Inside was a small specimen with tiny peltate leaves which had been sent to him in the 1970s as a *Utricularia*, collected by Howard Irwin, in Goiás State. I am almost certain that, at this point, my jaw dropped! The specimen had been annotated by Peter as a new genus of Scrophulariaceae: *Philcoxia*, commemorating David Philcox from Kew who had worked extensively on the family. Peter had never got round to publishing it. I was able to show him a plate of the new but different species, which we had collected in Bahia. This had been drawn and sent to me by Dr. Ana Maria Giulietti, with whom I was collaborating, from the University of São Paulo and who was working with her student Vinicius Souza, specialist of Brazilian Scrophulariaceae. We four agreed to write a joint paper, and I was given the task of preparing the various texts and concerting any differences of opinion. Finally we had our paper, on *Philcoxia*, a new genus of Scrophulariaceae, accepted for publication in Kew Bulletin, and including a third species from Minas Gerais State, which Vinicius brought to our attention. It is most unusual to be able to publish simultaneously a new genus composed of three new species! That it has recently been shown to be carnivorous, is another fortuitous discovery, linking it even more closely to Peter Taylor and his magnum opus on bladderworts. Long will he be remembered by many of us as a distinguished botanist and a great friend.



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